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Docket Management System  
Doc No. FAA-2004-17459-7  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Room Plaza 401  
400 Seventh Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20590-0001

DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION  
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May 20, 2004

Gentlemen: Regarding docket number FAA-2004-17459 (NPRM) I would like to make the following Comments. We have operated 2-3 Bell 47 G series helicopters under FAR part 91 in the Mt. Rushmore area of the Black Hills of South Dakota for the past 43 summer seasons providing sightseeing tours on routes which provide the best access to emergency landing sites, the least visible and noise intrusion, and at the same time providing our passengers an unequaled view of Mt. Rushmore and the surrounding Black Hills area. The route that goes nearest to Mt. Rushmore was established in 1968 after consultation With Then Mt. Rushmore superintendent Wallace McCaw. This route has been very carefully followed, With virtually no complaints from either Federal, State, or private interests since that time. We also offer a shorter tour which barely touches the Mt. Rushmore boundary on the east side.

Our business is open to the public from approximately may 20 to September 20.

We have had no helicopter accidents in the past 18 years.

We perform approximately 5200 commercial air tour operations per season.

We believe that we provide an unusually valuable and worthwhile service to the visitors of the Black Hills and Mt. Rushmore area, and we have collected tens of thousands of voluntary compliments regarding our service in guest books that we make available to our paid passengers. For many years Our service has been rated at the very top regarding value and enjoyment in an annual survey conducted by The Family Approved Attractions segment of the Black Hills-Badlands and Lakes Association.

We attend spring and fall Black Hills Air Tour Safety Meetings sponsored by the local FSDO. These Meetings have been ongoing for the past 7 or 8 years and are attended by representatives of The Local Tour Operators, Mt. Rushmore National Monument, Badlands National Monument, U.S. Forest Service, Ellsworth Air Force Base, Custer State Park and any other interested persons or groups. Air tour Safety and flight patterns and altitudes are the main focus of these meetings, and any issues important to the attendees are discussed and dealt with promptly. We support and compliment the FAA for arranging and directing these important meetings.

Rushmore Helicopters, Inc. collects, generates and pays in excess of \$100,000.00 in taxes to local, State and Federal agencies annually, as well as furnishing full time employment for two persons and Seasonal employment for four persons.

Our flight patterns, altitudes and noise abatement procedures have evolved from many years of experience with safety foremost in mind, and since we have had virtually no complaints from anyone about anything, we sincerely hope that in the development of the final Air Tour Management Plan the information hereby provided will be very thoughtfully considered, and that no, or very little modification of our current methods of operation would be required. Respectfully submitted,

*Deane A. Schiltz, MGR. RUSHMORE HELICOPTERS, INC.*